

THE PARLIAMENT



The Parliament of Romania is in Bucharest and is made up of two chambers: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Senate of Romania (Romanian: Senat) is the upper house in Romania's bicameral parliament. It has 137 seats (as of November 28, 2004), to which members are elected by direct popular vote, using Mixed member proportional representation in 42 electoral districts (the 41 counties plus the city of Bucharest), to serve four-year terms.

After the Romanian Revolution of 1989, the Senate was housed in „Palace of the Senate” (Romanian: Palatul Senatului), located in Revolution Square. That U-shaped structure was built from 1938 to 1941 under engineer Emil Prager's coordination, following the plans of architect Emil Nădejde. It housed the Council of Ministers and from 1958 to 1989 it was the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. During the Revolution, Romanian President Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife Elena fled by helicopter from the roof of the building. In 2005 Senators moved into the Palace of the Parliament, joining their colleagues from the Chamber of Deputies. „Palace of the Senate” now houses offices of the Ministry of Administration and Interior.

The Chamber of Deputies (Romanian: Camera Deputaților) is the lower house in Romania's bicameral parliament. It has 315 seats, to which deputies are elected by direct popular vote on a proportional representation basis (Mixed member proportional representation starting 2008) to serve four-year terms. Additionally, the organisation of each national minority is entitled to a seat in the Chamber (under the limitation that a

national minority is to be represented by one organisation only). The representation for the Chamber of Deputies is a deputy to 70000 inhabitants. A senator is elected to 160000 inhabitants. Prior to the modifications of the Constitution in 2003, the Electoral system is proportional (members are elected from all parties that passed the electoral threshold of 5% of the votes cast in the algorithm). Elections are held every four years, and are made through a proportional representation system of voting in single-member constituencies. The last election last was held on 30th November 2008.

Voting age is 18.

The candidates must have attained, by election day, aged at least 23 years to be elected to the Chamber of Deputies or local administration council, aged at least 33 years to be elected to the Senate and age at least 35 years to be elected President of Romania.

In Romania 51.3 percent of the population are women, yet their representation in parliament is only 9.7 percent. Only one woman is in the Romanian government: Elena Udrea, who heads the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism.

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THE CONSTITUTION



The Constitution of Romania is the fundamental law that establishes the structure of the government of Romania, the rights and obligations of the country's citizens, and its mode of passing laws. It stands as the basis of the legitimacy of the Romanian government. The constitution was most recently revised by a national referendum on October 18-19, 2003. The new constitution, which took effect October 29, 2003, follows the structure of the Constitution of 1991, but makes significant revisions.

The first constitution of the United Principality (later Kingdom) of Romania was adopted July 1, 1866. After the extension of national territory in 1918, a new constitution was approved March 29, 1923. In the communist period, the constitution was modified in 1948, 1952, and 1965. After the Revolution of 1989, a new constitution was adopted in 1991. The revision of the 1991 Constitution was approved by the Romanian Parliament, and was adopted by a constitutional referendum held October 18-19, 2003. A total of 55.7% of eligible voters turned out, with 89.7% of those voting in favour of the changes. The new constitution took effect October 29, 2003. More than half of the articles of the constitution underwent changes, large and small. The most important changes were: national minorities have the right to use their native language in dealing with the governmental administration and the courts, private property is guaranteed by the protection of the law (previously property was only “protected”, not “guaranteed”), the mandate of the President of Romania is extended to 5 years (previously it had been 4 years), military conscription is regulated by organic law (previously it was made mandatory by the Constitution and starting 2007 it will not be mandatory), parliamentary immunity is limited, once Romania accedes to the European Union (EU) citizens of EU countries will have the right to vote and to run as candidates

in local elections (if they live in the relevant locality), entry into the European Union and NATO will not require a further referendum – a parliamentary vote (by a 2/3 majority) would be sufficient.

Revision of the Constitution may be initiated by the President of Romania on proposal of the Government, at least one fourth of the number of Deputies or Senators, and at least 500000 citizens entitled to vote. The citizens who initiate the revision of the Constitution must come from at least half of the counties. Each of these counties and in Bucharest must be registered at least 20000 signatures in support of this initiative. In 2009, President Traian Băsescu sent to presidents of both Houses of Parliament a letter requesting a referendum, on the day of the presidential election, to consult the public about reduction to a single chamber Parliament with maximum of 300 MPs. Legal committees of Parliament have given a negative opinion.

The fundamental rights and freedoms from the Constitution of Romania are: individual freedom, right to defence, freedom of movement, personal and family privacy, inviolability of domicile, secrecy of correspondence, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, right to information, right to education, access to culture, right to protection of health, right to a healthy environment, right to vote, right to be elected, right to be elected to the European Parliament, freedom of assembly, right of association, labour and social protection of labour, prohibition of forced labour, right to strike, right of private property, economic freedom, right of inheritance, living standard, protection of children and young people, protection of disabled persons, right of petition, right of a person aggrieved by a public authority.

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